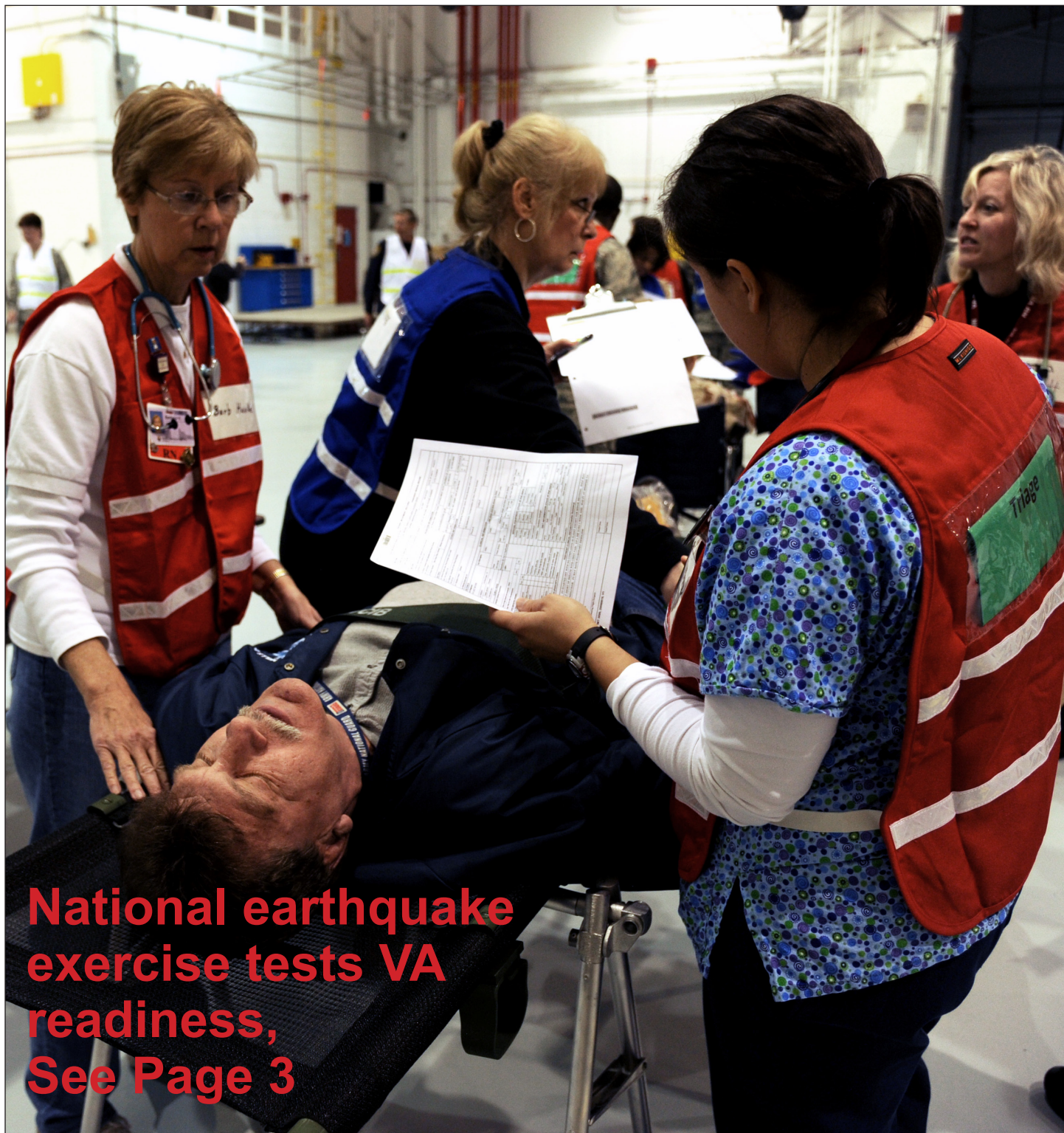


5000 West



Vol. 2, No. 6
June 2011

For employees, volunteers and patients of Zablocki and our community clinics



**National earthquake
exercise tests VA
readiness,
See Page 3**

In Briefs

Final ROH takes place

The final Reclaiming Our Heritage historical weekend takes place June 4 and 5 on the grounds of the Milwaukee VA campus.

Entry is free and open to the public.

Reclaiming Our Heritage features military re-enactors from all different eras, food booths, demonstrations and other hands-on activities.

The camps open at 9 a.m. June 4, and there will be a 9:30 a.m. flag raising and opening ceremony. The Positively Patriotic Parade takes place at 10 a.m., beginning near Old Main and winding through the campus.

There will also be a chaplain's field Mass, 10:30 a.m. Sunday, in the field near the Building 12 chapel.

A limited number of tickets will be sold for daytime tram tours of the cemetery,

cemetery lantern tours, and a new feature, "Voices of Wood National Cemetery."

For more information on Reclaiming Our Heritage, including the entire schedule, go to: www.frohmilwaukee.org.

Free zoo tickets

The Milwaukee Zoo's annual Free Family Day for active-duty military and veterans takes place July 3.

Tickets for free parking and entry to the zoo are only available at county veteran service offices, June 1 to July 1. Military and veterans must go to the county office where they live.

Those picking up tickets must have a valid military, retiree or VA patient ID, a DD Form 214, or must be in the state veteran's database. Tickets are limited to the veteran, spouse or significant other, and immediate family members, with a maximum of 10.

There will be no will-call this year, and tickets are only available at the county offices.

Milwaukee residents can pick up tickets in Building 4,

Cover shot

Medical professionals from the VA and other area hospitals tend to domiciliary patient Dennis March in an aircraft hanger at the 128th Air Refueling Wing, as part of the May 18 disaster drill.



Photo by Luis Alani



Photo by Brian Walker

Veteran outreach

Beth Ann Smith, who oversees Milwaukee VA enrollments, chats with two veterans during an outreach event May 15 at VFW Post 7534 in Howard, Wis. The VA conducts numerous community events throughout the year to answer eligibility and enrollment questions. For more information about VA benefits and eligibility, call 414-384-2000, ext. 42038.

Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For more information, call 414-382-1727.

Blues workshop

Jazz vocalist Janet Planet and guitarist Tom Theabo will conduct a "Sing the Blues" workshop for all veterans, 1 to 3 p.m. June 13 in Domiciliary 123.

The two will give demonstrations, give a brief history of the genre, teach different styles and help participants write their own blues lyrics.

Planet, who will also perform 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. July Fourth at the Lake Wheeler Pavilion, has been

described by Jazziz Magazine as a "Vocie of the new jazz culture ... amazingly powerful with seemingly limitless expression."

For more information on the workshop, call Alice Steuck Konkel at 414-384-2000, ext. 41693.

Seeking writers

Not seeing your department news in 5000 West and wondering why? It's because you haven't volunteered yet.

The Public Affairs Office is looking for new talent to provide stories and photos for 5000 West, Facebook and the web site.

If you'd like to give it a shot, call Gary Kunich at 414-382-5363.

5000 West



5000 West is a recurring publication produced by the Public Affairs Office and Medical Media of the Zablocki VA Medical Center, and is intended for employees, volunteers, patients and friends. Views

expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the medical center. While 5000 West encourages submissions for future editions, we cannot guarantee publication, and reserve the right to edit all copy so it conforms to editorial policy and guidelines. To submit information, e-mail: Gary. Kunich@va.gov, or call the Public Affairs Office at 414-384-2000, ext. 45363.

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Earthquake

VA tests readiness with national disaster drill

BY BRIAN WALKER
5000 West staff writer

Doctors, nurses and other VA troops jumped into action May 18 to treat disaster “victims” as part of a national exercise to respond to a Midwest earthquake.

The Zablocki VA Medical Center sent four doctors, a pharmacist and about 20 nurses to the 128th Air Refueling Wing at the Milwaukee airport to receive the exercise patients, help triage them, and then send them onto hospitals throughout the community.

The exercise scenario centered around a 7.7 magnitude earthquake near Marked Tree, Ark., and another 6.0 magnitude earthquake near Mt. Carmel, Ill., which caused catastrophic damage to at least eight states in the Midwest. Officials said this area does actually fall along a major earthquake fault line which has seen severe earthquake activity about every 100 years. The last actual, big quake was in 1811.

As part of the exercise, the president declared the area a disaster zone, and as many as 160 patients had to be airlifted to the Milwaukee area because other hospitals were overrun.

The receiving part of the drill took place inside one of the hangers at the 128th. The environment resembled a moving colorful quilt, as each team — Security, Planning, Treatment and Transport all had bright vests designating their role. The triage process was also color based, from the green stable area to yellow serious and red critical care.

Some of the VA’s domiciliary patients played

the part of casualties, along with airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing.

At least 10 of the exercise patients were taken to the Zablocki Emergency Department to test readiness in the hospital itself.

Keith Gillespie, currently living in the Domiciliary, volunteered to be an earthquake victim. His enthusiasm was evident in the role he played — a 74-year-old with dementia, who lost a hearing aid in the earthquake and then had a heart attack after being triaged.

“I am glad to help with this important drill,” he said. “I tried to take the role seriously and act it out as it was designed.”

Back at the Zablocki Emergency Department, more doctors and nurses stood by to bring in and further treat the patients, said Sharon Wolf, Emergency Department program manager.

For Emergency Department Dr. Daniel Ross, the exercise was an abrupt welcome to his new job at Zablocki. He previously worked as an ED doctor at an Aurora hospital, and recently joined the VA.

“I’ve been working in emergency rooms for 15 years, so we do these kinds of drills constantly,” he said. “It’s really the only way to keep all these skills sharp, because you don’t get the chance to practice them every day. You learn something each time. Otherwise, when it really hits the fan, if you aren’t ready, and you don’t practice, it can be complete chaos.”

(Gary Kunich contributed to this article).



Photo by Gary Kunich

Curtis Ambulance emergency medical technicians Will Robak (left) and Dan Robakowski help move a seizure patient onto a gurney with the help of respiratory therapist Tom Brooks at the Milwaukee VA during the emergency drill to respond to a Midwest earthquake.



Photo by Gary Kunich

Emergency Department Dr. Daniel Ross checks on patient Staff Sgt. Samantha Olson at the Milwaukee VA. Olson, from the 128th Air Refueling Wing, played the part of military person who cut her arm on a chainsaw while clearing debris from the earthquake.



Photos by Luis Alani

Medical professionals attend to Keith Gillespie, who played the part of a patient with dementia.

Pedal power

Two-wheel commute made easy with upgraded trail

BY BRIAN WALKER
5000 West staff writer

Fed up with four-bucks-a-gallon gas?

Yeah, we all are. But lean a little closer to the page and we'll whisper a secret that can make your commute to and from work virtually free.

As a bonus, this idea frees up parking spots, promotes good cardio health, and will help those pants fit a little better.

It's called the bicycle, and a growing number of employees are joining the trend.

The extension of the Hank Aaron Trail,



Photo by Brian Walker

VA employees Jen Koch, who works in the pharmacy, and Michelle Lanouette, who works in physical therapy, get in a good workout and enjoy some fresh air by biking to work via the expanded Hank Aaron Trail.

which runs through the VA campus, has made it easier for employees to bike into work and has opened up the Menomonee Valley for exercise and fun.

Pharmacist Jennifer Koch is one of our avid biking employees and said it's addictive.

"After I rode my bike to work the first time, I was hooked," she said. "It only takes me 10 minutes longer than driving and it allows me to get some fresh air and exercise and helps me jump start my day. On Brewer game days I can get home just as fast on my bike because I can avoid all the traffic by taking the Hank Aaron trail."

Another employee who rides frequently is Amy Thompto, a registered dietitian.

"I bike to work for many reasons. We all know that parking is limited on the grounds, but I can always find a place

to lock up my bike," she said. "I'm also saving money by using less gasoline while burning calories, which helps me to maintain a healthy weight. My 15-minute ride into work wakes me up and allows me to start my day with a positive attitude."

To get more people involved, the Bike to Work Committee is encouraging employees to join the free Wisconsin Bike Challenge.

You can register at www.challenge.bfw.org, and our team name is VA Bike Committee.

As part of the program, our VA will compete against other companies and groups to see who is burning the most calories, biking the greatest number of miles, saving the most gas and potentially having the greatest "green" impact on the environment.

Mark your calendars: Upcoming bike week activities

Bike to Work Week is June 6 to 10, and biking enthusiasts here want to use that time to encourage more employees to use pedal power.

Some of the events scheduled for the week include:

June 6: The WAMM (Walk a Mile or More) group will clean the Hank Aaron Trail sections that cross the VA grounds. The Bike to Work Committee has adopted this section of the trail. If you'd like to help out, call Nancy Wilke at 414-384-2000, ext. 42893.

June 7: Brown Bag lunch in Matousek Auditorium from noon to 1 p.m. Drop by, eat your lunch and listen to two speakers. Melissa Cook from the Department of Natural Resources will discuss the Hank Aaron Trail, followed by Willie Lee from Dream Bikes who will talk about a unique charity that involves bikes.

June 8: Bike to Work Movie Day in Matousek Auditorium from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Even if you can't stay the entire two hours, bring your lunch and check out the biking flick, "American Flyers,"

with Kevin Costner.

June 9: Clear out the Parking Lot Day. We want to see as many people as possible biking to work this day. At 12:15 p.m. there will be a Bike Workshop in the basement of Building 111 in room BO305, Physical Therapy. There will be mini-clinics offered on tire changing, bike helmets and safety tips for general biking.

June 10: Friday post-work group ride. All bikers invited to meet at Lake Wheeler at 5 p.m. for a group ride.



Photo by Gary Kunich

The Rev. Drew Russell blesses the bike and a biker who participated in last year's bike blessing at the chapel and VA south entrance. Besides the blessing, the veterans also raise thousands of dollars for the chaplain's fund. This year's blessing is noon June 4.

Get your motor runnin' ... head out to the chapel ... 21st annual bike blessing June 4

BY GARY J. KUNICH
5000 West editor

When the Rev. Norm Oswald first started working at the Milwaukee VA 21 years ago, he realized there was still a large veteran segment that didn't want to come here for care.

He aimed to change that.

He reached out to a couple Vietnam veterans already getting care here and came up with an idea for a bike blessing, which not only gets people into the VA, but raises money for needy veterans through the chaplain's fund.

The 21st annual bike blessing, which is open to all bikers in the community, takes place noon June 4 at the VA chapel.

Bikers can park in the South Entrance parking lot and walk into the chapel.

The event also raises thousands of dollars for the Chaplain's Fund.

"I can use that money to give veterans bus tickets, help them get some clothes, canteen books or some extra money to travel

and visit a relative," Oswald said. "This is about giving people a chance and letting them keep their dignity. Nobody should have to wear someone else's underwear. We can help them out.

"This started as an outreach to those Vietnam veterans," he added. "There were many who didn't trust the government or didn't want to step into the VA. This was a way to connect with them and get them connected."

Since then, Oswald has seen as many as 200 bikers at a blessing.

"We even have employees show up, and one year, had a child with his tricycle and helmet," he said. "Everybody is welcome."

Stephen "Grey Fox" Cournia, who served in the Army from 1958 to 1961, has come to each blessing, and has been instrumental in raising the funds.

"I think this goes both ways," he said. "We get to help out the VA and our veterans, and there are veterans who need help and this is a way for them to get that help," Cournia said. "Twenty years ago, if you wanted to help the VA, they might tell you, 'We need pots and pans,' but there were many of us who wanted to directly help veterans. Every penny that is collected goes to those veterans. There are no administrative costs."

For more information about the blessing or fundraiser, call Cournia at 608-538-3277, or the VA chaplain's office at 414-384-2000, ext. 42160.

New blog guides your nutritional journey



Kayleen Wichlinski

Pea's and Q's

BY KAYLEEN WICHLINSKI
Registered Dietitian

Sometimes your job can make you pretty popular, especially when people find out you're a dietitian.

With so much conflicting information out there, it is not unusual for people to want a little free advice. Some questions we constantly hear ...

What are power foods to keep me healthy?

What diet will really help me lose weight?

Help! What are some healthy recipes I can make at home for my family?

How do Dietitians keep up with these daily nutritional concerns from staff? The great thing about working here is my fellow dietitians and I don't mind giving away some of the

trade secrets to help everyone live a healthier lifestyle. That is the reason why we got into this business. We just needed a way to share the wealth with all VA staff at one time.

We came up with the idea of a weekly Dietitian's Blog, where you can get answers to all of your fitness and nutrition questions. We can help provide useful tips on your weight loss journey.

Look for our Dietitian's Blog, "Dietitian Pea's and Qs" in a variety of places.

You can access it from work by going to the intranet and finding it under Quick Navigation Links, the Nutrition Team Homepage or: www.milwaukee.va.gov/articles/dietician1.asp. It is also available on the external web site, www.milwaukee.va.gov, under the "Resources" section at the bottom of the page.

But wait! Don't order just yet! We'll throw in even more! We will also provide a

different form of the blog on a recurring basis in 5000 West.

The blog allows all Milwaukee VA staff to post their nutrition concerns, review recipes, and see actual food photography from the health-nuts themselves on the intranet site.

We have lots of information to share. It is far too easy to fall prey to the latest diet craze or fitness pill that only provides temporary weight loss and can sometimes be dangerous.

So before you load up on cabbage to eat soup for seven days straight, or buy some pills that promise a bikini body in a bottle, give us a holler, and send us your questions.

You may send us questions and comment on the intranet blog itself.

You can also e-mail questions to: Kayleen. Wichlinski@va.gov or Katherine.Merriman2@va.gov.

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Photo by Luis Alani

Nick Hundley says hello to Donald Counihan in the Community Living Center.

Padres hit homerun with Brewers fans

BY BRIAN WALKER
5000 West staff writer

They might not play for the home team, and they might not have scored many runs during their three-day stretch in town, but the San Diego Padres still hit homeruns when players visited with veterans May 10 at the medical center.

Major League players Nick Hundley, Clayton Richard and Tim Stauffer volunteered to come out to the VA while in town for their series against the Milwaukee Brewers in early May.

The players are involved with a charity called Athletes for Hope. The mission of the charity is to educate, encourage and assist athletes in their efforts to contribute to community and charitable causes, to increase public awareness of those efforts, and to inspire others to do the same.

The players surprised veterans in our east lobby with a flurry of handshakes and greetings and then moved on to the Community Living Center, Palliative Care and Spinal Cord Injury.

The banter between the players and the veterans, many of whom are avid Milwaukee Brewers fans, was enjoyable. The players were gracious and expressed their thanks to all of the veterans they interacted with.

“We are happy to be at the VA,” Stauffer said. “Our visit with the veterans is the least we can do and it will never compare to the service these veterans provided to our country.”

Chris Wytenbach from Athletes for Hope has also reached out to the Brewers and more teams for other visits, and Brewers officials said they hope to make that happen later in the season.



Photo by Luis Alani

Clayton Richard chats with Roger Ditter and Glenda Riggs, a nursing assistant, in the Community Living Center's dining room.



Photo by Brian Walker

Clayton Richard, Nick Hundley and Tim Stauffer take a group photo with Harry Ibis (above) in the Spinal Cord Injury Department. Hundley and Stauffer also posed with Gary Klatt (right).



Photo by Brian Walker



Photos by Gary Kunich

Vets rock the Coffee House

BY GARY J. KUNICH

5000 West editor

Tom Weber picked the opening riff of the Rolling Stones', "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," during one of the Coffee House opening numbers.

But if anything, there was plenty of satisfaction from the crowd of about 100 people who showed for the May 23 talent showcase in the Milwaukee VA's Recreation Hall.



Shep Crumrine, a music therapist who runs the Coffee House events, said this was one of the most diverse lineups of talent in the six years since he started the program. It started off with the juggling of Dr. Bert Berger, the co-manager of the mental health division, who wowed the capacity crowd by throwing as many as five purple, twirling sticks in the air at one time. Weber and the rest of the VA Jam Band rocked out, not to mention performances from a

drum soloist, the Jeff Clair Project, acoustic guitar players, and magician Garbonzo the OK.

And belly dancers. Oh yes, we shan't forget the belly dancers.

Crumrine started the Coffee House events about six years ago to give veterans in various recovery programs an outlet for their different talents as part of their therapy. It has since grown to include any veterans who want to get on stage to perform, and happens about six times a year.

"We want people to share the spirit and enthusiasm of veterans in recovery, and see some of the incredible talent we have," said Shep Crumrine, who organizes the event. "Many of our veterans have worked very hard and have a powerful story about their own lives, and how that can help others."

The next Coffee House will take place in late summer. To sign up or for more information, call Sandy Rice at 414-384-2000, ext. 41673.

PHOTOS
(Clockwise from above): Belly dancers from a local community group perform at the VA Coffee House event May 23. Other acts included Dr. Bert Berger's juggling, and Howard Lewis, who led the crowd in a couple Wolfman Jack howls. Pam Panniell and Tom Weber from the VA Jam Band kick off "I Can't Get No Satisfaction," which seemed to imminently satisfy the crowd.



In Service

Congratulations to the following Zablocki employees who will reach career milestones in June 2011:

40 YEARS

Nancy Fleischman
Carol Marks
Vicki Purol

35 YEARS

Jill Barney

30 YEARS

Margaret Amato
Peter Bengtson
Cynthia Darling
Susan Fliess

Mary Genac
Henry Hernandez
Timothy McCormick
David Rickaby
Roger Warner

25 YEARS

Maria Dalziel
Sharon Fritz
Mary Hammer
Darla Johnson
Cynthia Kutcher
Katherine McNally
Jeri Wroten

Carrie Zandi

20 YEARS

James Bernet
Noreen Docta
Colleen Kelly
Lori Peterson
Teresa Roman-Geiger
Joseph Streff
Bryan Vail

15 YEARS

Jeffery Clair

10 YEARS

Mandi Casey
Chad Cooper
Lisa Crivello
Patty Guedet
Sandra Harsh
Susan Powers
Melissa Saavedra
Rebecca Smith
Steven Sticht

Reporting Aboard

Zablocki welcomes the following new employees:

Karey Alaimo

Licensed practical nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Gardening.

Why did you choose the VA?: Wanted to provide service to our vets.

First impressions: Needs to be remodeled.

Emily Bannister

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: Granite Bay, Calif.

Hobbies: Volleyball, swimming and reading.

Why did you choose the VA?: School internship. It's a chance to work where my mom did in the 1960s.

First impressions: Busy! Friendly staff and patients.

Matthew Behrend

File clerk

Hometown: Oconomowoc, Wis.

Prior military service: Army, seven years.

Hobbies: Baseball and football.

Why did you choose the VA?: As a veteran, I can't think of a better job than to help other veterans.

First impressions: Seems like a very professional and satisfying place to work.

Tuwanda "Puddy" Black

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Styling hair and playing with

my children.

Why did you choose the VA?: To be a part of a beautiful family, and to have a great future for myself, as well as for my family.

First impressions: How much love and care everyone has for each other, to let the veterans know they are not alone.

Kelly Braunel

Food service worker

Hometown: Waukesha, Wis., and Eagle River, Ark.

Hobbies: Fishing.

Why did you choose the VA?: To serve the veterans, to honor my two grandpas who served for us.

First impressions: I'm amazed at the rich history. The VA has its own community, which I love.

Charlotte Briggs

Patient services assistant

Hometown: Felch, Mich.

Prior military service: Air Force, four years; and Air Force Reserves, six years.

Hobbies: Art, singing, and spending time with my children.

Why did you choose the VA?: To serve my fellow veterans and help them anyway I can.

First impressions: Great place to work, with great pay and benefits. Very rewarding.

Denehsa Buckner

Health technician

Hometown: Chicago, Ill.

Hobbies: Bowling, skating and reading.

Why did you choose the VA?: I admire the VA's commitment to provide care and benefits to veterans and their employers.

First impressions: The value of compassion and the support of diversity.

Kevin Butler

Licensed practical nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Prior military service: Army Reserves, eight years.

Hobbies: Music, grilling and family.

Why did you choose the VA?: Always wanted to work here and for our veterans.

First impressions: Great place.

James "Vaura" Champagne

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Parkridge, Ill.

Prior military service: Coast Guard, six years.

Hobbies: Mountain biking, Shorin Kempo, weight training and cross country skiing.

Edmund Dy

Physician, Cleveland Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Hometown: Sheboygan, Wis.

Hobbies: Horseback riding and cooking.

Why did you choose the VA?: Good recommendations.

First impressions: Very friendly.

Lisa Dymond

Registered nurse

Hometown: Greendale, Wis.

Hobbies: Reading, shopping and gardening.

Why did you choose the VA?: New opportunities.

First impressions: Warm, friendly people.

Tameka Dyson

Dental assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Why did you choose the VA?: I choose to work at the VA to give back to the hard-working veterans who serve our country.

Continued on Page 10
See Reporting Aboard

Dossier

Donna Babineau Secretary

Division: Pastoral care

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Years of government service (plus any military time): 16 years.

Family: Husband, Jerry; two sons, Mike and Nick; a stepson, Jerry Jr.; and grandchildren, Nick, Sam and Katherine.

What is your ideal job?: The one I do now.

What is the coolest thing about your family?: The coolest is they are always willing to help others.

If you could pick your own theme music, what would it be?: Gypsy.

Any pets?: A dog named Lucky.

What are your favorite types of songs?: Country, soul and pop.

What are your favorite reads?: John Sandford and Norah Roberts novels.

What are your favorite TV shows?: "Criminal Minds," "Saturday Night Live," and "Justified."

What TV show are you most embarrassed to admit you watch?: None.

What are your favorite movies?: The ones that have you sitting on the edge of your seat biting your nails. My all-time favorites are, "Dancing with Wolves," and

"True Grit."

What are you most likely to be searching for when you raid the fridge after midnight?: Cheese, salami and pickles.

If you were sent to the moon with nothing but a book and a book light, what book would you choose?: "How to Get Back to Earth."

Favorite sports and teams?: Football and the Green Bay Packers.



Photo by Gary Kunich

Donna Babineau poses in front of her desk with photos of her family close by.

What are your hobbies?: Painting, reading and crafting.

What's your favorite ethnic food?: Hungarian goulash.

What is one thing most people don't know about you?: I was a model.

What is the best advice you have

received?: Stand up for what you believe in.

Do you believe in ghosts?: Yes.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?: Pork.

What is your biggest pet peeve?: People who lie.

What is your worst habit?: Smoking.

Three things that can always be found in your refrigerator?: Milk, eggs and cheese.

What is the meaning of life?: To give of yourself, to love and respect others.

Favorite pair of shoes: Western half boot.

If you were an animal, what would you be?: A wolf.

Bratwurst and beer, or filet mignon and Merlot?: No brainer! Merlot and the red meat.

If you won \$20 million, what would do with it?: Pay off bills, and give some to my kids and charities.

Does your bologna have a first name, and if so, how's it spelled?: G-E-R-M-A-N.

Favorite Elvis song?: "Love me Tender."

A little bit country, or a little bit rock n' roll?: Country.

If you were stranded on a deserted island with just a boom box and three CDs, what would they be?: George Strait, Rascal Flatts and Reba McEntire.

Motto you live by: "Do unto others ..."

If you were ever on an episode of "Cops" what role would you have in it?: A cop.

Reporting Aboard

Continued from Page 11

First impressions: Wow!!!
What an amazing and historic place.

Shelbie Farber Wiechert
Registered nurse

Hometown: Fox Valley, Wis.

Hobbies: Spending time with family and pets.

Why did you choose the VA?: It is a great way to give back to people who give so much.

First impressions: A warm

sense of welcoming and kindness amongst staff and patients.

Joseph Flanagan

Medical supply technician

Hometown: Detroit, Mich.

Hobbies: Gardening, camping and woodworking.

Why did you choose the VA?:

To serve those who serve us.

First impressions: Friendly and welcome atmosphere.

Anne Friedman

Registered nurse

Hometown: Oconomowoc, Wis.

Hobbies: Running and cooking.

Why did you choose the

VA?: I have spent the last year working part-time at the VA as an RN in research, and applied for a full-time position when it opened.

First impressions: A professional yet family atmosphere.

Lynn Gettrust

Clinical nurse

Hometown: Waukesha, Wis.

Hobbies: Pets, shopping and

movies.

Why did you choose the

VA?: Several of my clinical experiences as a master's student were at the VA. I enjoyed the staff and patients.

First impressions: Very positive.

Manolito "Cico" Gomez
Registered nurse

Hometown: Oak Creek, Wis.

Hobbies: Playing sports with kids and friends.

Why did you choose the VA?: I enjoy working with the vets.

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See One on One

Reporting Aboard

Continued from Page 10

I was outside (work) pool, and discovered what a great population it is to work with.
First impressions: I love it.

Jennifer Graham

Licensed practical nurse

Hometown: Minneapolis, Minn.

Prior military service: Air Force Reserves, eight years.

Hobbies: Bike riding, photography and traveling.

Why did you choose the VA?: Wanted to work with vets.

First impressions: Staff are very friendly and helpful.

Kristine Gross

Registered nurse

Hometown: Eagle, Wis.

Hobbies: Horses and motorcycles.

Why did you choose the VA?: Benefits and opportunities.

First impressions: Friendly atmosphere.

April Harrington

Health technician

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Cooking, reading and football.

Why did you choose the VA?: I wanted to work for the VA because I have heard nothing but good things about it.

First impressions: I felt welcomed.

Thad Henkel Hanke

Nurse anesthetist

Hometown: Lomira, Wis.

Hobbies: Hunting and fishing.

Why did you choose to work at the VA?: To work with the vets.

First impressions: I look forward to working here.

Minerva "MJ" Juarez

Licensed practical nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Why did you choose the VA?: To be a part of the team and help our veterans.

First impressions: People are friendly.

Lisa Kasperek

Nurse practitioner

Hometown: Appleton, Wis.

Hobbies: ATV riding, reading journals, exercising, and spending time with family.

Why did you choose the VA?: Location and honor of serving our veterans.

First impressions: Positive, friendly people!

Jami LaRue

Registered nurse

Hometown: Racine, Wis.

Hobbies: Camping, hiking, biking and anything outdoors.

First impressions: Very big, very busy and a lot of history.

Lisamarie Loether

Food service worker

Hometown: West Allis, Wis.

Hobbies: Modeling and being with my children.

Why did you choose the VA?: A lot of my family works here and it's a great career choice.

First impressions: Very busy. Lots of wonderful employees.

Marsha McHenry

Security clerk

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Never really acquired any! I belong to a couple organizations that take up a lot of my free time.

Why did you choose the VA?: I enjoy working for and with people.

First impressions: Beautiful, well-kept facility and grounds. Friendly, helpful people.

Cantrelle McMoore

Air conditioning equipment operator

Hometown: Memphis, Tenn.

Prior military service: Air Force, two and a half years.

Hobbies: Playing with my kids, and playing NBA 2K11

Why did you choose the VA?: Good job opportunity for me to support my family.

First impressions: Good.

Beth Miller

Registered nurse

Hometown: Waukesha, Wis.

Prior military service: None myself, but my husband served in the Army National Guard for 29 and a half years.

Hobbies: Learning to sail.

Why did you choose the VA?: To care for people who served in the military and because of the VA's advancements in improving care and safety of patients.

First impressions: Quality and service oriented. Busy and organized.

Christina Moore

Pharmacy technician

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Shopping.

Why did you choose the VA?: It was recommended by employees.

First impressions: I was very impressed by the healthcare given here to the veterans.

Andrew Mowery

Payroll technician

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Prior military service: Coast Guard, 10 years; and Coast Guard Reserves, 10 years.

Hobbies: Biking and brewing beer.

Why did you choose the VA?: To help vets.

First impressions: A positive environment.

Mary Mrozinski

Registered nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Why did you choose the VA?: To give back to the community, and an opportunity to serve the veterans.

First impressions: Very welcoming. Awesome opportunity.

Thaddeus "Ted" Pelzek Jr.

Respiratory therapist

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Prior military service: Disqualified because of hearing.

Hobbies: Fishing and making things with my hands.

Why did you choose to work at the VA?: I needed a change, and thought the VA was the right place. I want to help veterans.

First impressions: People are very friendly and caring.

Phillip Rettig

Diagnostic radiology technician

Hometown: New Berlin, Wis.

Hobbies: Fishing.

Why did you choose the VA?: I like working with vets.

First impressions: Clean.

Michelle Rotgers

Medical support assistant

Hometown: Wauwatosa, Wis.

Hobbies: Sewing.

Why did you choose the VA?: The mission to help our servicemen and women to provide healthcare with kindness and heart.

First impressions: Wow! What a huge complex. A lot of activity!

Susan Scott

Registered nurse

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See Reporting Aboard

Reporting Aboard

Continued from Page 11

Hometown: Neenah, Wis.

Hobbies: Gardening and scrapbooking.

Why did you choose the VA?: I have friends who work here who encouraged me because it's a great place to work. I come from a big family of veterans.

First impressions: Friendly.

Sabrina Shaw

Medical support assistant

Hometown: Amherst, Wis.

Prior military service: Navy, five years.

Hobbies: Photography, running and books.

Why did you choose the VA?: I want to work with vets. I miss the military hospital setting.

First impressions: Old building, nice people.

Antanette Shellough

Human resources assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Community service.

Why did you choose the VA?: I have heard only positive comments regarding the VA. I wanted to be a part of a historical agency that is still growing.

First impressions: Very busy. Everyone I came in contact with was very helpful and nice.

Victor Sudo

Social worker

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Prior military service: Marines, 12 years.

Hobbies: Cycling and hiking.

Why did you choose the VA?: Veterans serving veterans. Best care in the nation.

First impressions: Friendly and clean.

Mack Taylor

Contract specialist

Hometown: Gurnee, Ill.

Prior military service: Navy, 10 years.

Why did you choose the VA?: To help veterans.

First impressions: Great place.

Katie Thone

Human resources assistant

Hometown: Whitewater, Wis.

Hobbies: Volleyball (I'm in a summer league), vacationing and traveling.

Why did you choose the VA?: I heard great things from a neighbor of a relative. I started out at the Madison VA and loved the entire system, especially serving the veterans.

First impressions: Extremely busy! Has a lot of character, with very nice and talkative veterans. It is a hub of activity.

Samantha "Sam" Vick

Registered nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Skiing, tennis, gardening and cooking.

Why did you choose the VA?: Working as part of the VA, it's an opportunity to

give back to those who deserve it.

First impressions: The VA has given me a first impression that choosing a career here was a great decision. Everyone was extremely welcoming and speaks highly of the VA.

Annette "Tootsie Roll" Walker

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee.

Hobbies: Gospel.

Why did you choose to work at the VA?:

I want to be a big help to veterans, to make them feel happy and help them live a long time."

First impressions: It makes me feel good about working here.

Kelly Wuhrmann

Registered nurse

Hometown: West Allis, Wis.

Why did you choose the VA?: I have a lot of family members who are vets, including my husband. They utilize the healthcare system, and seeing the care provided to them made me want to be part of that system and give back for the services they provided us.

First impressions: Friendly and welcoming staff.

Nikki Zellner

Social worker

Hometown: Luxemburg, Wis.

Hobbies: Traveling, gardening and music.

Why did you choose the VA?: Great group to work with, both clients and team.

First impressions: Very friendly people.

VA Voices

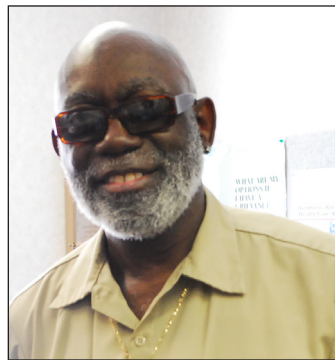
Question: What is the meaning of life or secret of happiness?



Jana Zimmerman, Spinal Cord Injury Department dietitian: "I guess my answer is 'To help others.' I do that by trying to help my family, my coworkers and my patients."



Sharon Pecs, Registered nurse, Research: "To make life good and to have fun doing it. I do that by traveling and appreciating my surroundings, and enjoying nature."



John Wooford, Housekeeping aide: "To keep the Lord in your life, and to have a good attitude. I have a loving, beautiful wife, and a good life. The secret is to enjoy what you have."



Kai Sun, Anesthesiologist: "To realize your full potential, take care of your family and to contribute to mankind."